

# What we found

## Colorado Media Industry Insights

COLORADO  
MEDIA  
PROJECT

Andrew Elliman



*Colorado Media Project  
wanted to know:*

**What do Colorado  
journalists think  
about the future?**

*So we took a page out of  
their notebooks and  
asked a few questions.*

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DENVER  
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**THE COLORADO SUN**

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20+ media organizations

*Across print, digital, and broadcast ... representing a combined*

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# About problems ...

What are we in danger of losing?

## *1. As audiences:*

- “the media commons”
- “a mass circulation, general interest publication”
- “the watchdog”
- “city and statehouse beat coverage”
- “in-depth investigative reporting”
- “any semblance of accountability from positions of power”
- “an informed public”

## *2. As journalists:*

- “newsroom culture & norms”
- “institutional knowledge”
- “the journalism craft”
- “mentorship for the next generation”

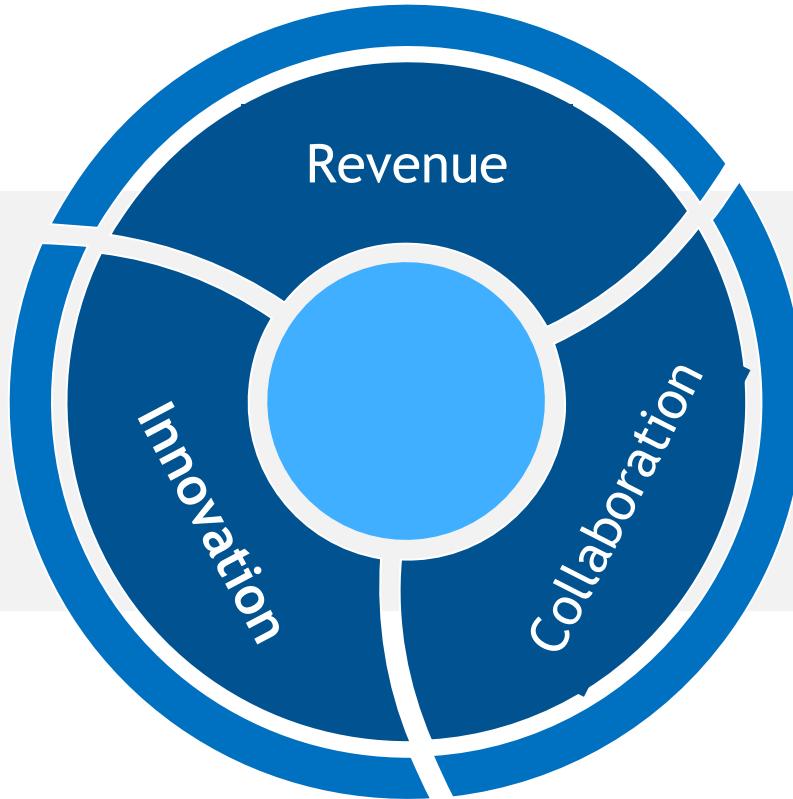
## *3. And the contrarian view:*

- “nothing ... the market will correct itself”
- “there isn’t a lack of information ... just a lack of an information business that makes money”
- “these challenges are an opportunity ... we’re in a period of creative destruction.”

## About solutions ...

How can we be better?

All of our conversations about sustainable local journalism inevitably gravitated toward three central themes: (1) revenue (2) innovation (3) collaboration.



# Revenue Opportunities

Where to seek sustainable revenue streams

**“No one-size-fits-all solution to revenue.”**

## Advertising

## Subscription

## Events

## Philanthropy

“Almost impossible to build a sustainable local media business on ad revenue alone.”

“Longer-term content sponsorships are great for funding in-depth coverage but require a ton of bandwidth to execute.”

“Subscriptions and small donors are crucial. Unlike a large advertiser or philanthropic entity, they don’t unsubscribe en masse”

“A grassroots subscriber/donor base takes years to build and significant resources to maintain.”

“Two ways to do events. One, to super-serve believers. Two, to build your brand among new audiences. The second is much harder.”

“Events are a great way to engage with the community. Otherwise it’s easy to become just ‘The Media.’”

“Philanthropists are coming around to the idea that if they care about an issue, they should care about how it’s covered.”

“Just as journalists aren’t comfortable asking for money, non-profits haven’t fully figured out how to invest in journalism.”

# Innovation Opportunities

How journalists can better connect in a digital world

## *What Colorado journalists think about “innovation”*

Starting with well-founded skepticism

“The problem with tech people getting involved in journalism is they only care about the result. They don’t understand the process or care to.”

Still, we have an engagement problem

“Journalism has traditionally been very one-way, as in here are the stories we’re telling to you. It needs to be more two-way.”

Young audiences connect on social

“We reject the notion that young people don’t consume news. They just use their own self-curated social feeds. We haven’t figured out how to repackaging our content for those channels.”

But social requires a unique set of skills

“Too often publications haphazardly repackaging or blast out their content across all these platforms, which have their own unique audiences and voices.”

We can’t be naive

“Can’t put all the eggs in one basket. What if they switch up the algorithm?”

We must be agile

“We have to be trans-media.”

# Case Study: Innovation

Coloradoan sets a standard for innovation in small newsrooms



## Innovations

- Neighborhood Watch FB Group
- Influencers FB group for editorial input
- Automated FB chatbot
- FAA-licensed drone video/photography team
- \$30,000 in annual event revenue
- Year-long sponsored content series on school funding
- Analytics and marketing skills for revenue

“We will never say ‘that’s not us’ or ‘we’re too small.’  
One thing I’ve learned from working in small newsrooms:  
if you put three motivated people in a room, there’s a  
lot you can accomplish.”

**Eric Larsen**

Regional Executive Editor, Coloradoan



# Collaboration Opportunities

Why we should work together for a better future

How:	Co-working space	Collaborative reporting	Content aggregation
Why:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Create cross-pollination” to “preserve newsroom culture”</li><li>“Cost efficiencies on rent, back-office and production expenses”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Leverage expertise of niche publications”</li><li>“Fill in coverage gaps”</li><li>“Share in innovation best practices”</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Increase audience access to new information”</li><li>“Increase journalist and publication access to new audiences”</li></ul>
Why not:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>“Journalism is a competitive sport”</li><li>Not confident that adequate trust has been built</li></ul>		

# Case Study: Collaboration

RMPBS and the upcoming Buell Public Media Center



“What we’ve seen in Colorado and around the country, is journalists doing great work, but struggling to get the business part figured out. We wondered, is there a way we can be that kind of a base, physically and digitally, for organizations to come together? A foundation giving them more solid ground to stand on.”

**Laura Frank**  
VP of Journalism, RMPBS